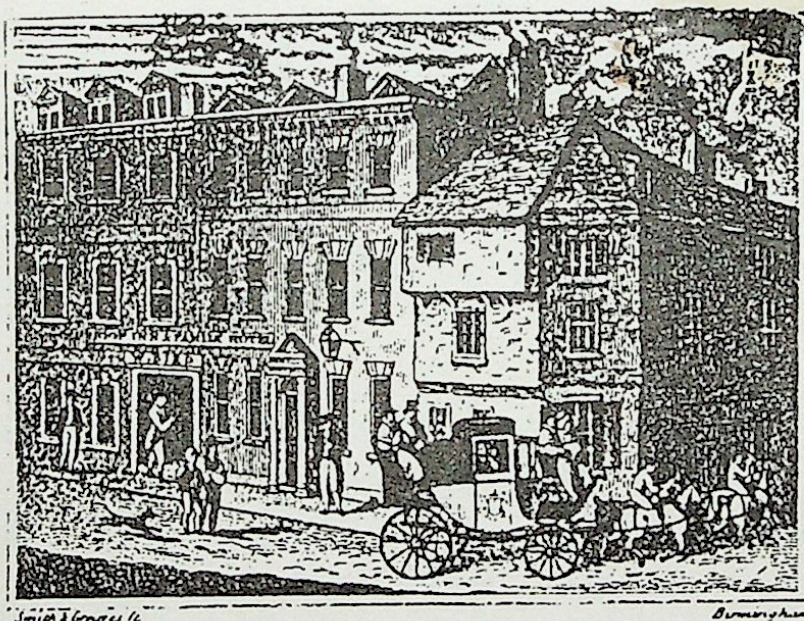


# CAMBRIDGESHIRE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



WILLIAM BIRD,  
*Bridge Street.*  
*(Cambridge.)*

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## VILLAGE BLACKSMITH IN SWAVESEY

by the late F.C. Wood (B.A. Cantab.)

In Genesis IV the Bible describes Tubal-Cain as "an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron". Our village community may have been somewhat lacking in brassworkers but our two farrier/blacksmiths were indeed artificers in iron and would have delighted the great Tubal-Cain himself.

Charles Burling had his smithy on the Ramper Road corner. His son, George, who managed a cycle repair shop next door, also helped in the smithy when needed. The other blacksmith's shop was run by Charles Culpin and was in High Street, between Canham's grocer's shop and Zac. Parish's butcher's shop. Between them these two blacksmiths kept all the village horses efficiently shod - and also those in a good many other villages besides. In addition they repaired, or made spare parts for, ploughs, harrows, hayrakes, grasscutters, reapers and binders and threshing tackle. They repaired pitch-forks, dung forks, pickaxes, harness chains, scythe blades and hoes. They tyred cart-wheels - in fact they did anything and every that was expected of an artificer in iron.

I knew Charlie Culpin's shop very well. His third son Stanley who was my own age and a contemporary at school, used to call for me at 7 a.m. on summer mornings and we used to go up to the forge to open up and light the fire. This was a joyous business. After digging out a hole in the ash on the hearth, putting in screwed-up paper and sticks, and piling on a heap of small-sized fuel on the burning kindling you could, by pumping the long handle of the bellows at maximum rate, produce clouds of stinking black smoke which filled the smithy and rolled out of the big doorway across the street. Having achieved this, we then pumped more sedately so that the fire began to flow fiercely and could then be left ready for the arrival of Charlie Culpin himself.

He made his way from his School Lane house about eight o'clock. Longfellow's village blacksmith was a "mighty man" - so was Nillice Charles Culpin. He was approaching middle age, six feet tall and built on an Homeric scale. He wore a flat cap, well grimed with soot and smoke, pulled down over his dark hair. He had a straggling dark moustache and his heavy jowls usually carried an overnight stubble of beard. His jacket was worn unbuttoned, displaying his leather apron. This was belted in below his middle age spread and came down below the knees, hiding his trousers. The apron was split at its lower edge to allow more freedom of movement, it was a sort of masonic apron and, except at weekends, Charlie wore it continuously. As he came to start work in the morning he walked up the road with military precision - a legacy from his service in a Guards regiment - his body leaning slightly forward from the hips and his arms half bent at his sides as though he was awaiting an invisible adversary. As the sound of his steel tipped leather boots, grimed with years of forge dust, came up the road, we got ready to go home for breakfast.



All the buildings on that side of High Street, commencing with Canham's shop, had their frontages raised well above the road level by being built on a cobbled side walk. To enter the forge, therefore, you stepped up into, and across, these cobbles. The main entrance was a large door extending from floor level to eaves which could be opened and fastened back to the brick party wall between the forge and the grocer's shop. From the back wall of the forge, and the same distance along as the width of the large doorway, a stout wooden partition, the height of the roof joists, extended three-quarters of the width of the building thus forming a large stall in which, if required, two horses could be tethered. On the other side of the partition was the rest of the forge, this floor space occupying two-thirds of the total. At the far end was the brick built raised hearth with its short brick chimney. The three walls of the building were of stout weather boarding treated outside with tar. The roof was slated. There was no ceiling, the roof-space between joists and rafters being used as a storage space. A stable door entrance, next to the big doorway, also gave access to the forge from the roadway. The top half of this door was fastened back during working hours. On the opposite side of the building another doorway provided an outlet into the yard at the back of the shop.

The working area had a character of its own. Two anvils, each mounted on a huge horizontal section of tree trunk, faced each other across the floor, some three feet away from the hearth. They looked like two bulky prehistoric monsters with their protruding pointed "bicks", squaring up to each other ready to do battle across the floor. On the lefthand side of the hearth stood the huge vertical bellows with a long wooden arm, its tapered handle polished by years of use against its counterweight. The righthand side of the hearth was piled with fuel, while in the front was a steel tank full of water for quenching the hot iron. The various tongs, pincers and such like tools for handling the work were kept more or less permanently half submerged, in this tank. The feature of Charlie's forge that always surprised me as I grew up to notice things was the complete and utter organized chaos that prevailed.

First of all there was the dust. As you walked from the hard earth floor of the stall into the forge itself, so you walked into an ever-increasing depth of dust which reached four inches and more around the anvils. This dust was light and floury, pale grey in colour and rose in puffs around your feet at every step. It looked of medieval vintage and it intruded into trouser turnups and infiltrated into laceholes on boots and shoes. There were two work benches of stout timber, one fixed into the wooden partition, the other to the right of the stable door entrance. The bench on the partition supported a monster-sized vertical hand drill; the rest of the bench tops were loaded with boxes of tools, bags of horse shoe nails, rasps, files, chisels, hammers, odd lengths of angle iron, iron piping, hoe heads for repair or sharpening sets of triangular blades from some farmers mowing machine - you name it, it was there. Larger items, too big to rest on the benches, overflowed on the floor. An iron plough leaned drunkenly, you stepped over plough-shares and coulters or banged your shins on pieces of a dismantled harrow. A pile of discarded horseshoes and odds and ends of scrap angle iron, awaiting the periodic collection by the scrap merchant, took up more floor space. The roof space overhead was filled with long lengths of all sorts of iron and



and steel piled on to the roof tiles. From every rafter hung huge festoons of dusty cobwebs from whose shelter hairy spiders of large size and ancient lineage maintained a malignant and disapproving watch on the activities going on below.

A blacksmith's job is thirsty work. Charlie Culpin liked his pint and Providence had arranged that the "Rising Sun" was almost opposite. He often used to slip over for a quick one either before he went home for midday dinner or, as soon as he got back. This routine almost invariably resulted in an oft repeated sequel. One of Charlie's farmer customers was Fred Day, who kept a team of huge Shire horses - magnificent beasts whose care and grooming unfortunately often left something to be desired. In order to avoid any loss of horse power, a visit to the blacksmiths was deferred if possible until a rainy day when one of the farm lads was told to take one (sometimes two) of these Shire horses to Charlie's shop. In most cases the lad contrived to arrive there when the place was empty; he quickly tied up the beast in the stall, and fled for his life! Sooner or later Charlie came across the road - to be confronted by a placid monster, its coat steaming gently and the copious Shire feathering round the pasterns clogged up with great gobbets of Swavesey clay and manure. Sometimes, for good measure, the horse would have "greasy" legs. For a moment Charlie would stand in stunned surprise. He knew all the horses in the district, and he knew quite well where this one came from. Arms akimbo, he would stand on the cobbles and apostrophise the absent owner. "Hah! Fred Day! Yew cunnin old bugger yew Allus leaves your 'orses 'ere when yew cant work 'em! What a bloody state! Look at them legs!" At this the horse looked round in protest. "And yew can stop staring" roared Charlie. With much grumbling and puffing through his moustache he proceeded to clean off the horse's legs with a piece of old sacking, and to find out what shoe replacements were needed. By this time a group of us small boys were looking over the top of the half door, watching the blacksmith cleaning up the hoof, shaping up the shoe and trying it while hot, for fit. White clouds of pungent smoke swirled around and Charlie puffed, coughed and blew through his moustache, the horse, an amicable creature, now standing on three legs, decided to rest on Charlie! A roar went up: "Stop leanin' on me yew lazy great bugger - you're breaking my bloody back." As he let the hoof drop Charlie looked up and saw our row of heads staring at him over the door. "What yew staring at? What yew boys want?" "Nothing Mr. Culpin." "Well yew slubber orf 'ome duz yew'll get 'urt. Goo on." "Bloody boys" he grumbled as we vanished. Needless to say we were back again a few minutes later. We knew Charles Culpin for a kindly man - and he knew we knew!

On hot summer days clouds of acrid smoke and pungent profanity would billow out from the smithy doorway and curl round through the open door of the adjacent grocery. Sooner or later there would be a quiet but distinct 'click' as the door was closed discreetly to protect both management and customers from the onslaught.

The back door of the smithy opened on to the wide yard which was part of the premises of Zac. (Zachariah) Parish the butcher, and on whose land the smithy stood. Near the door was a flat area made of a six-foot diametered circle of heavy steel sheeting. A circular hole in the centre of this sheet-



ing was sufficiently large to accommodate any size of cartwheel hub. Rising from the centre of the hole itself was a firmly-fixed stout threaded steel bolt over which the wheel hub could be slipped and the wheel then clamped firmly down by screwing down a winged nut. Part of the yard beyond this area was occupied by a large open-sided shed where bullocks were temporarily housed prior to their being poleaxed in the slaughter house by Arthur Parish. The carcasses, after hanging and jointing eventually appeared in the butcher's shop. The side of this shed facing the smithy was demarcated by a five-foot-high wooden fence. Bernard Parish and I used to perch on top of this fence to obtain a grandstand view of the outdoor activities connected with the smithy.

These mostly involved tyreing or re-tyring cartwheels. By some village bush telegraph everyone seems to know when one of these operations was imminent. Whenever possible, fine evening in spring or summer was preferred when there was plenty of light outside and the weather was favourable. By ones and two's men of the village began to drift into the smithy. After some preliminary chatter, hand made cigarettes were rolled, pipes were filled, and, in an aroma of "Light Returns" and "Black Shag" operations began. The forge fire was stoked up until it was much larger than usual and the hearth area was cleared of unwanted objects. A ladder was put up into the roof space and after much discussion a length of suitable strip steel was eased out from the rest of the iron work stored there and lowered to the ground amid clouds of dust and cobwebs and consternation and rapid exodus of a host of black hairy spiders. While this was going on Charlie and some other helpers had rolled the cartwheel outside and bolted it down flat on to the steel base plate. He then produced a tool that his medieval ancestors would have instantly recognized. It consisted of a circular (or nearly circular!) wheel cut from sheet steel by a cold chisel by hand and the edges rasped smooth. A pivot through the centre of the wheel fixed it to a wooden handle so that the steel circle could revolve. Charlie made a chalk mark on one of the cartwheel felloes and a chalk mark on the steel wheel, lined up the two marks, and, with his usual puffing and blowing, revolved the measuring wheel around the cartwheel circumference muttering how many times it took to bring the marks together again. This usually necessitated more chalk markings and signs. Back inside the smithy the measurer was then run along the steel strip of the tyre to-be for the appropriate number of turns, plus allowances for expansion when the metal was heated, for when the two ends were welded, for when the tyre was shrunk on to the wheel itself. All these variations were worked out by rule of thumb and by experience. The final length having been decided, the length of metal was cut off, bent while cold into a circle and the two ends heated red hot and welded on the anvil by an ingenious double half joint. Operations had begun to speed up. Coats were taken off, shirt sleeves were rolled up, and using long handled tongs and pincers the helpers manoeuvred the steel tyre so that it rested part on the anvil and part in the fire. Someone took the job of working the bellows continuously so that the coke blazed with a regular and even incandescence. Charlie, like some infernal wizard was now standing within the hollow "O". Under his directions the tyre was rotated a little at a time so that every part passed through the fire at a regular rate and a black heat was evenly obtained throughout. Dust billowed from the floor, heat radiated from the tyre and the glaring fire, sweat dripped from arms and



faces and there was a continuous demand for onlookers to provide pieces of old sacking or cloth to protect hands from the increasing heat of the iron tong handles. The moment arrived. The tyre heat was found to be satisfactory. With much heaving the tyre was raised vertically and with many directions and counterdirections it was carried towards the open door like some scene in a ballet, the helpers trying to stumble in unison, sweating, swearing and frantically trying to avoid being branded by the hot tyre. There was one last agonising moment when everyone, plus the tyre, had to squeeze through the doorway. Around the wheel circumference a set of short steel spikes had been knocked in temporarily, the tyre was lowered until it rested evenly on these markers and Charlie sprang into action. As the tyre slid over the felloes he knocked out the spikes and hammered it down. Clouds of wood smoke arose and little flames flickered up. These were immediately doused by someone with a watering can and clouds of steam mingled with the wood smoke. "Not too much duz you'll crack the bloody wheel" bellowed Charlie continuing his methodical hammering and joined by other hammer wielders who helped to drive the tyre down so that it fitted the wheel rim. More water, more steam, creakings as spokes and felloes were gripped tighter and tighter by the shrinking tyre, and the job was done. We jumped down to look at the wheel with its new tyre too hot to touch but fitting perfectly. Red handkerchiefs dotted with white spots came out of pockets and everyone mopped their faces and necks. Pipe and cigarette smoke added its quota to the wood smoke and steam aroma, jackets were put on and everyone trooped over to the "Rising Sun" for a well earned pint. I saw this operation many times. In later years I helped with it. I never ceased to marvel that, using such tools and facilities, village blacksmiths had for generations achieved similar perfection as shown by our own craftsman Charles Culpin.

I used to enjoy the smithy's theatrical lighting effects. In the gathering gloom of a winter evening, with no lighting available, Charlie would often be working on to complete some job or other. Looking over the half door into the smithy ones eye could distinguish little in the encircling gloom except where the fire glowed a dull red. Then, as the bellows handle was pumped, a rush of air blew the fire into a white incandescence and Charlie's face and burly form, the two anvils, part of the hearth, and some floor area all became visible in a circle of rosy light. As the fire died down the flocking shadows rushed back again and the scene disappeared, only to be recreated at the next operation of the bellows. It was like watching one of the magic lantern shows we used to attend magnified to a life size scale!

As the hot iron came glowing from the fire and was beaten on the 'hard face' of the anvil a firework display of sparks cascaded around and by their lights you could once more discern a half-bodied blacksmith, his face and hands visible in the light from the hot metal.

Just after the 1918 Armistice we had a few days hard frost and some of us went skating on the frozen shallow flood water in Cow Fen. My skates were a pattern that were fixed on the front of the boot by a strap, but the back was secured with a small Z-shaped clip which could be screwed back so that the flat top of the Z bit into the heel. Unfortunately, the rivet fixing the lower part of the clip to this bolt worked loose, the clip fell off and was



lost and my skating finished abruptly. I wandered home disconsolately swinging my skates by their straps and came past the blacksmith's shop. Charlie was standing in the big doorway. "What, had enough o' skatin' then boy?" he asked. "No Mr. Culpin my skates are broken." "Broken are they, well let's 'ave a look at 'em shall we?" and I went into the shop. He saw what the trouble was and started rummaging about in boxes, through odds and ends of scrap metal until he found a piece of steel strip of the right gauge. He bent it to shape, filed the top arm so that two small prongs appeared, pinched a hole in the bottom arm to take a rivet and then proceeded to fix the new strip onto the skate by hammering in a new rivet. The three sections of the clip were about " long, and the width was the same, yet this huge man with his big calloused hands treated this small piece of metal like an artist. It took him an hour or more before he was satisfied and he then handed me the skate saying "There you are boy. You'll find that will be alright." All this time I had been miserably calculating how many weeks pocket money at 2d per week would be required, and I said "How much is it please Mr. Culpin?" "Ow much?" he said, his dark eyes twinkling "Let's see now shall we! Well! We can't ave you not being able to go skating can we? I think we'll forget about it shall we? 'Orf yew go" and he ruffled up my hair with his great hand. A piece of kindness to a small boy by a big man - big in every aspect of the word - that I have always remembered and who I had the privilege of knowing, Nillice Charles Culpin - artificer in iron!

Editorial Note: Mr. Wood's father was the Swavesey School Headmaster 1911-1942. Mr. Wood attended the village school before going on to the Cambridge-shire County High School for Boys, then to Trinity College, Cambridge. He left the village in 1933. He died in Worthing quite recently.

## EXPANDING VICTORIAN SHOPPING IN CAMBRIDGE

BY Leonard Amey

The sprawling eastern fields of pre-enclosure Cambridge, which fell into the civil parish of St Andrew the Less, came by the end of the Victorian era to house well over half the population of the borough. Even by 1851 the 225 of the 1801 census had grown to 11,776. The 1850s were a period of stagnation and the figure for 1861 showed an increase of less than 100, while the borough total actually fell back. But from then on growth accelerated again, the parish figures being: 1871 15,958, 1881 21,076, 1891 25,091 and 1901 27,820.

Before 1860 the retail trading area of Cambridge remained closely confined to the mediaeval limits and ended about the corner of Petty Cury. Even St Andrews Street came into the picture only with the start of Robert Sayle's business there in 1842. Josiah Chater opened three shops between 1850 and 1856 after the end of his apprenticeship with Eaden Lilley in Market Street. All three were within a few minutes walk of this, in Sidney Street, Bridge Street and Market Hill. But the new potential customers were anything up to a mile and a quarter away and without public transport.



Small wonder then that little local shops opened up among the cottages of Barnwell and New Town to supply day to day necessities. The distance factor was less important in New Town but in Barnwell it operated from the start and influenced the range as well as the number of new shops. Barnwell shopping finally focussed on the Fitzroy Street-Burleigh Street area. Here, by the turn of the century, and in the later developing Mill Road, almost any customer requirement could be supplied.

Burleigh Street and much of Fitzroy Street were largely built up very soon after enclosure, mainly with small cottages, as Baker's 1830 map clearly shows. However, by the end of the decade Fitzroy Street had Barnwell's only chemist and only watchmaker. But Barnwell as a whole was better known for the inordinate number of public houses and beer retailers.

As building in Fitzroy Street extended westward one important arrival was that enterprising chemist Joseph Sturton. This was during the 1840s, when the Thompson family were establishing a long-lived furniture business on the other side of the road. Other new arrivals were a dealer in toys, glass and china and Barnwell's first fishmonger.

After the stagnation of 1850s there came a renewed demand for housing, especially artisan housing of a rather better type than had hitherto been available in the earlier Barnwell and New Town developments. Of this Sturton took full advantage; on land purchased from the Geldart family he developed first Gwydir Street and then the area between it and the railway. Two doors from Sturton in Fitzroy Street at this period was S.Y. Young, linen and woollen draper, whose business was to expand phenomenally, even before it passed to Laurie and McConnall in 1883.

In 1869 the Cambridge Co-operative Society started trading in a small way in City Road. Two years later it moved to premises in Fitzroy Street and a further move to Burleigh Street began in 1882. Expansion there changed the whole local shopping pattern and served also as a stimulus to considerable private trading development as well from then on. This included drapery, tailoring, furniture and a straw hat maker who carried on well into the next century.

By the 1880s Fitzroy Street had two distinct characters. The eastern end was still a mixture of small shops and cottages, plentifully interspersed with public houses. The other end was dominated by large stores and a varied collection of higher class small shops. Between the two were a couple of pawnshops - a necessity of life for many of the inhabitants of the older parts of Barnwell. Whereas earlier establishments of this kind had been of a rather hole and corner nature, these combined money-lending with more substantial subsidiary businesses - in one case that of silversmith, in another cheap clothing and boots.

Laurie and McConnall's premises were twice hit by fire but went on expanding, with a roof tea garden and a cupola bandstand on top. Once Victoria bridge was opened, with its avenue across Butts Green the "respectable" end of Fitzroy Street could count on new customers from



Chesterton, since it still had some distance advantage over the old centre. By the end of the century the western half of Fitzroy Street had, beside Laurie and McConnell, Sturton and Hawkins' main bakery and confectionery shop, 3 furniture stores, 2 milliners and 2 drapers, 4 shoe shops, 2 photographers, a dispensing chemist, an ironmonger and a cycle dealer. Burleigh Street was equally varied with one large draper and a large tailor and clothier, beside other drapers and tailors, 2 jewellers and a specialist in umbrella repairs. The shopping area had extended itself across East Road into Norfolk Street. The big stores had proved an actual attraction for smaller and more specialised businesses.

The Mill Road area had no such focus but finally acquired an ever greater diversity of shops, though the development came much later than in Barnwell. The greater part of the main road frontage up to the railway was college owned and for long not available for speculative development. Even such sites as there were did not attract much attention until the extension of the Barnwell sewers - well into the 1860s. Then small houses did extend between Convent Garden and Mawson Road and just beyond the Union Workhouse (later Maternity Hospital). But the next 20 years saw the extension of artisan housing in Sturton Town to Mill Road and further migration across the railway into Romsey Town. Meanwhile Corpus had made land available for more middle class housing just beyond the Cemetery.

The first shops, again mainly for food, were built out in front of what had been terraced cottages. It was not until the end of the 1880s that any new buildings went up primarily as shops, with living accommodation over. These were on Caius frontages between Mortimer Road and Covent Garden and between St Barnabas Church and Devonshire Road, as well as a few between. Their potential clientele was growing fast, including not only the artisans of Sturton Town and Romsey but also customers from the new middle class developments on college land south of Mill Road.

By the end of the century there were no private houses left on the south side between Mortimer Road and Devonshire Road. With no very large store, there was a great deal of competition between shops, which included 8 tailors and clothiers and 2 outfitters, 4 milliners and 4 drapers, 2 footwear shops, 2 tobacconists, 2 stationers, 2 chemists, 4 hairdressers, 2 hardware stores, 2 cycle dealers, 2 photographers, 2 jewellers and watchmakers, a china shop, a piano warehouse and 3 monumental masons near the cemetery.

Shopping development did not stop at the railway. Though here food shops predominated there were also 2 tobacconists, 2 hairdressers, 2 tailors, 2 drapers, a chemist, a corn and forage store, 2 furniture shops and a china warehouse. What Mill Road never had was a pawn shop. Nor as yet was there a branch bank anywhere outside the traditional centre of the town.

Twentieth Century social security has largely eliminated the pawnshop and a new generation of mortgagee owner-occupiers has taken over from artisan rent-payers. Catering for them, banks and building societies have opened suburban branches. Since car ownership is now so widespread much shopping too has



moved even further out. Older shopping districts have seen an incursion of new traders - dealers in things electrical and electronic, travel agents, ethnic take-aways and betting shops to name only a few.

Mill Road remains an area of comparatively small shops, a few of which have continued in the same line throughout the century. Others have changed hands and functions with every trade fluctuation and every rise in rent and other outgoings. The road's chief handicap is the absence of convenient parking and a consequent traffic congestion.

Parking and service areas have been provided for Fitzroy Street and Burleigh Street, transformed by the final completion of the Grafton Centre, across the poorer half of Fitzroy Street. It has a variety of shops, several large, all under cover. It did not arrive without a long controversy, during which a curious conglomeration of small businesses sprang up on the site, comprising rather esoteric eating houses, craft shops and others whose stock could be described as either junk or antiques, according to taste.

Burleigh Street has been pedestrianised, as has the remainder of Fitzroy Street. In Burleigh Street the Co-op is bigger than ever but the rest is highly varied. Much of Fitzroy Street is still in the hands of the builders, particularly the old Laurie and McConnall site and the premises next door. The rest is an interesting mix and the whole could have a bright future.

#### SAMUEL & JOHN TRIGG OF BASSINGBOURN, AND SOUTH AUSTRALIA

by Alan Roberts (Adelaide University, S.Australia)

My interest in Samuel Trigg and his brother dates from late 1973 when I purchased his original family homestead in the coastal town of Port Elliot, South Australia. Despite its grand title the town is now little more than an overgrown village and popular tourist resort, conveniently placed on the southern side of the Fleurieu Peninsula, sixty miles from Adelaide. The Harbour has been long abandoned but there are still some fine examples of colonial architecture. Samuel Trigg ranks among the town's 'pioneer settlers', as a prominent local builder and timber merchant, while John Trigg earns a place in local memory as the onetime proprietor of a saddlery shop near the main street. The discovery of a letter written by Samuel Trigg to his younger brother and sister in September, 1852 urging John to 'come at once to Adelaide' led me to the parish of Bassingbourn from whence the family originated. I was curious to find out more about the Trigg connections with Bassingbourn and the circumstances surrounding their migration to Australia.

Local historians usually interpret the past through the lives of the more 'sedentary' inhabitants, the sons and daughters who stayed behind to inherit the farm or continue the family trade or who elected to marry and settle down locally. However, it is occasionally useful to balance this 'settled' view of the social order with a look at those who quit their native parish to seek their fortunes further afield. Overseas emigrants particularly help to high-



light periods of economic and social uncertainty. This has especial relevance to Cambridgeshire which provided many thousands of men and women for the great exodus to the Colonies in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Samuel and his brother were probably typical of many young farmers and craftsmen uprooted from their settled existence by the economic forces unleashed by industrialization.

The Trigg family have a comparatively long association with Bassingbourn. The family surname is thought to derive from the Scandinavian tryggr, denoting a 'true' or 'trustworthy' follower. Men known by this name probably settled in the midlands during the Danish invasion, although written references to the name only go back as far as the twelfth century.(1) Nevertheless, there were definitely some Triggs living in or near Bassingbourn by the late Tudor period as there is an entry in the Bassingbourn parish register for the marriage of Bartholomew Trigg and Margaret Reason in January, 1570/1.(2) The couple may not have actually been living in the parish, for there are no subsequent baptisms. However, we can be fairly certain that at least one line of Triggs was settled in Bassingbourn fairly continuously after 1740. From this date onwards first Thomas Sen., then Samuel, James and Samuel again present a succession of young Triggs to be christened in the local church.(3)

Most of the Triggs were smallholders or tenant farmers. In the pre-enclosure period around 1800, for example, Thomas Trigg was one of twelve men farming '250 acres of arable land lying dispersed in the parish or common fields' forming part of Thomas Hinde Cotton's estate.(4) His second son John Trigg was listed among the five 'farmers or principal landowners ... paying the poor rates', who presented James East of Bassingbourn before the local justices on 17th June, 1814 for keeping a disorderly alehouse.(5) They were also involved in the day to day running of the parish. Samuel Trigg (John's elder brother in the first generation) was a popular choice as 'howard', or warden in charge of the hayfields, between 1773 and 1785.(6) In the spring of 1804 the vestry appointed this same John (or another of the same name, it is not possible to identify the householder absolutely) to be parish surveyor, charged with responsibility for supervising the upkeep of the highways.(7)

Successive generations of Triggs continued to take an active part in the parish throughout the early 1800s. John Trigg took office as overseer of the poor in 1805 and 1821 and as surveyor of the highways in 1809, 1817 and 1818. His son Samuel (father of the two brothers who emigrated to Australia) was appointed village constable from 1824 to 1828 and served as the 'pinder' or official in charge of the village pound, from 1832 to 1836.(8) The parish register from this period variously describes him as a 'pig-jobber', 'farmer' or 'farmer's bailiff', suggesting that he had several occupations connected with farming. These sidelines also seems to hint at a decline in fortune as is partly confirmed by the Poll Books for the election of 1830 which reveal that Samuel Trigg was a freeholder for land only, not as was more usual, for a house and land. We also learn from this source that Samuel may have had 'radical' sympathies, since he voted for Liberal candidates both in the 1830 and the 1835 Parliamentary elections.(9)

The enumerators' returns for the 1841 Census help us to more precisely identify the surviving Triggs in the parish at that time. According to the



Church register, Samuel and his wife, Sarah, produced eight children for baptism between 1815 and 1825, at least one of whom died in infancy. The 1841 schedule shows only four of these children still living at home. The eldest, Sarah, had presumably married and left home. However, the eldest son Samuel (24), described as a carpenter, was still under his father's roof along with his brother John (22), a shoemaker, and his two younger sisters, Elizabeth (20) and Mary (16). (10) The family homestead has not yet been identified, although it is described in the Census schedule as being in the 'North End', somewhere along the road running north of the church. (11) But there is some very precise information about the size of the holding. An auction notice drawn up by Messrs Cockett and Nash of Royston provides a full and detailed description of '3 acres of wheat, 7 acres of oats and 4 acres of peas' offered up by 'Mr Samuel Trigg, the Proprietor who is giving up the land', on 29th July, 1842. (12)

It is pertinent at this stage to examine some of the factors which might have led up to Samuel's decision to abandon his 14 acre holding. The 1830s and 1840s were particularly trying times for Cambridgeshire farmers and farm labourers. The Agricultural Labourers Revolt of 1830 and the increasingly more strident demands for reform by the Chartists, were symptoms of a general malaise expressed in its more extreme form by violent attacks on farmers. Contemporary local newspapers such as the Cambridge Chronicle and the Independent Press provide an excellent commentary on the issues at stake in their reports of Chartist meetings, riots and incendiarism. (13) The savage penalties meted out to lawbreakers, which frequently included transportation to the Colonies, did little to alleviate the problem. An increasing population and mechanisation of farming had brought about a situation where there was simply not enough land or work to go round. Indeed, a party of Parliamentary Commissioners sent to Bassingbourn in 1834 to investigate a series of local disturbances laid the blame for social unrest squarely on 'distress and want of employment'. (14) The accession of Queen Victoria in 1837 may have brought some slight relief - a move towards conciliation - but the outlook for the small landowner and agricultural labourer was still extremely bleak.

Bassingbourn, like many other Cambridgeshire parishes, was in the throes of a painful transformation, the continuation of a long process of land rationalization which culminated in 'the disappearance of the small landholder'. (15) The first half of the nineteenth century saw Bassingbourn's population increase from 828 in 1801, to 1,583 in 1841, a 91 per cent increase in four decades. (16) As the more substantial farmers consolidated their holdings the smallholders were slowly 'squeezed out'. By 1849 six farmers had over 100 acres, only four had between 10 and 100 acres and there were fifteen smallholders with less than 10 acres apiece. (17) The fact that most of these smallholders were tenant farmers made their position all the more precarious.

We cannot be certain why Samuel Trigg Senior decided to put up his land for auction but evidently neither of his two sons wanted to take up farming. Both had chosen a skilled trade as a livelihood. Samuel had married late in life and at 68 he was certainly old enough to retire, and he died within 15 months of disposing of the land. Neither of the two sons had any great incentive to stay in the parish after this and one can well imagine particularly



Samuel's desire to make a fresh start elsewhere.

Australia was the obvious choice. The local newspapers gave frequent reports of the departure of boatloads of emigrants, pedigree sheep exports and the occasional shipwreck on the shores of the Southern Continent. The prospect of cheap and abundant land for free settlers had replaced the Colonies' earlier, less savoury reputation as a convict haven. Indeed, it is somewhat of a coincidence that on the day Samuel Trigg's land was put up for auction the Independent Press provided a report on the third reading of the South Australia Bill in Parliament, containing a number of provisions to attract free settlers and smallholders(18). Several families from Bassingbourn and the surrounding villages packed up and left for Australia in the 1840s, including 4 members of a farm labourer's family on the ill-fated 'Cataraque', which foundered in Bass Strait on 4th August, 1846.(19)

Samuel Trigg's decision to migrate was not taken hastily: he did not sell off his household goods and chattels until the Spring of 1848, five years after his father's death. We are fortunate to have the original auction notice of the sale, including the sale bids for each item, among Cockett and Nash's Sale Books. The notice advertises a collection of 'Household Furniture' ... The Property of Mr Samuel Trigg, who is leaving the Country' followed by a list of 125 catalogued items.(20) Although not all of the furniture in the house appears to have belonged to Mr Trigg - the '30-hour clock with painted deal case' in the kitchen, for example, is marked to Mr Waldeck - it was comfortably furnished by the standard of the times. Mrs Trigg pressed the family clothes in a new 'Barnard and Joy's patent mangle' and could make up to 20 lbs. of butter in her patent butter churn. The family parlour was furnished with a 'two-leaved stout mahogany dining table', a quantity of bookshelves and a Kidderminster carpet (which went for 10s). The bedroom housed a 'four-post sacking bottom bedstead and chinz furniture with mahogany carved feet pillars, nearly new', a painted washstand, a clothes box and a child's wicker bassinet, which suggests that Samuel was already a parent. Mr Trigg's collection of carpentry tools, the timber in the yard, a 7 foot bench, 30 lbs. of plasterer's hair, two bundles of laths and building trestles, show that he had started work as a builder even before arriving in Australia. It is also interesting to see that quite a few items were bought by a Mr Trigg (perhaps brother John) and it is even possible that some of these might have been later shipped out to Australia.

We do not yet know Samuel's actual date of departure from Bassingbourn, but his movements on arrival can be pieced together from an article in the Adelaide Chronicle commemorating the 'pioneer settlers' of Port Elliot.(21) Samuel's eldest son, identified as 'Mr Trigg of Port Elliot' gives a colourful account of his father's first arrival on the south coast around 1850 'before the town had a name'. He describes how he trekked over the ranges from Willunga on foot, sleeping out in the bush to the accompaniment of wild dogs, bringing his wife and family up later in a bullock dray.

When he wrote to his brother in 1852 Samuel was still in Adelaide, although he may have already established a foothold in Port Elliot. His enthusiasm for the new colony is captured in discussion of the practical details



## KITCHEN.

LOT

- 1 Two flat candlesticks, snuffers and tray, Italian iron and heaters, and flat iron
- 2 Tea kettle and coffee pot
- 3 Iron saucepan and coffee pot
- Waldock* 4 One dozen glass bottles
- 5 Sundry yellow ware
- 6 Sundry white and yellow ware
- 7 Three brown pots & two pickle jars
- Waldock* 8 Two large stone bottles
- " 9 Two large blue edged dishes, two white ditto, water plate, and two pie dishes
- " 10 Three large white dishes
- " 11 Pair of cob irons and footman
- " 12 Oven door and frame
- " 13 Four wood seat chairs and one elbow ditto
- " 14 Four antique chairs
- Fuss* 15 Painted corner cupboard with three shelves
- " 16 Child's chair and stool
- " 17 Child's table-chair and towel horse
- " 18 One 4 and one 5-gallon wine casks
- " 19 A 26-gallon bell shaped beer cask
- " 20 Patent butter churn, will churn from 4 to 20 lbs.
- " 21 Cheese tub and two moats
- " 22 Cheese press
- Waldock* 23 Clothes press with six shelves, 4 ft. by 5 ft.
- Fuss* 24 A flour bin for half a sack
- " 25 A cupboard with folding panel doors and two shelves, and safe at the top with shelf and zinc front
- Waldock* 26 A 30-hour clock with painted deal case
- Fuss* 27 Barnard and Joy's patent mangle, nearly new

## LIVING ROOM.

- 28 Pair of bellows, cinder shovel, hand and banister brush



LOT

*Sundry*

- 29 Pot top fender with sliding bar
- 30 Set of fireirons, nearly new
- 31 Book shelves and sundry books
- 32 Kidderminster carpet, 9 ft. 6 in. by 10 ft.
- 33 Sundry pieces of carpet and hassock
- 34 Six new cherry tree wood seat chairs
- 35 Ditto
- 36 A two-leaf stout mahogany dining table and cover
- 37 Six rush seat chairs
- 38 Nine china cups and saucers, teapot, two basins, jug, and two plates

*Trigging*

BEDROOM.

*Sundry*

- 39 <sup>4</sup>~~Six~~ painted rush seat chairs
- 40 Painted washstand with marble top, jug, and basin
- 41 A wire fender brass mounted
- 42 Three pieces of carpet nearly new
- 43 A four-post sacking bottom bedstead and chintz furniture, with mahogany carved feet pillars, nearly new
- 44 Deal clothes box with two drawers and locks
- 45 Ditto
- 46 Two ditto trunks
- 47 A child's wicker bassinet
- 48 Two large globes
- 49
- 50

*F. J. 2*

WORKSHOP.

- 51 A 7 ft. carpenter's bench with a screw
- 52 Tool basket with sundry tools
- 53 Thirty lbs. of plasterer's hair, two bundles of lath, and two trestles
- 54 Shovel, two levels, & sundry articles
- 55 A seventeen round ladder with oak pins
- 56 A twenty-one ditto



of John's arrival.

We have just received the box containing letters and presents from all of you with which we were very pleased, but what delighted us most was to hear you talk more decidedly about coming to Australia. I hope whenever you do set foot on board ship it will be one bound for Adelaide Direct. I have seen Melbourne and am daily hearing more about it and feel certain that you would live much cheaper and more comfortably in Adelaide. There is not a house fit for you to live in without paying from 20 to 30 shillings per week and it is much more likely that you would not be able to get one at any price, but come at once to Adelaide where you will meet a hearty welcome and a good house to go into, living rent free till you was able to pay..."(22)

John needed no further urging. Within a few months of receiving this invitation he and his family set out from Southampton on board the 'Ramilles' which arrived in Port Adelaide on 19th May, 1853.(23) While his brother had been in Australia John had started his own shop in Bassingbourn. He was the only one of the town's five Master Shoemakers listed in the 1847 Post Office Trades Directory.(24) Most of the other Triggs in the parish seem to have died. By 1851, besides John and his wife Ann, there was only John's elderly uncle James, the church clerk, and cousin William in the Union Workhouse.(25) His fiercely evangelical Uncle John who was 'mighty in prayer' and a founding father of the Congregational Chapel, died not long after the elder Samuel Trigg.(26) John and Ann's departure for Adelaide therefore signalled the virtual extinction of the family name within Bassingbourn parish.

The subsequent history of the two brothers belongs to the town where they settled and put down roots. In 1854 Samuel purchased one of the new house sites in the centre of Port Elliot within sight of the shore and started work on a substantial stone dwelling with six open fireplaces, an outside kitchen, a cellar and a well, quarrying the hard limestone rock just beneath the surface. Like most of the pioneer builders he built in the style with which he was familiar, using imported sash windows and panel doors and finishing off the corners and windows with brick dressings. When he had finished he probably helped John to build his saddlery shop a few streets away and there is evidence of his handiwork in other parts of the town as well. Port Elliot in the late 1850s was still a thriving port, the first call for the mail package and the main outlet for the River Murray trade. Cargoes of manufactured goods were offloaded onto the jetty in Horseshoe Bay, then carried further along the coast by rail to Goolwa at the head of the Murray where they were conveyed into the interior by steamer. The paddle steamers returned laden with cargoes of wool and wheat for the return trip to England.(27)

While the town itself did not live up to earlier hopes of becoming the capital and main port for the new Colony - the harbour proved to be far too dangerous in rough weather - there was plenty of gainful employment to keep Samuel and John occupied.(28) Both of them prospered and made a name for themselves. When Samuel died at a ripe old age he was buried in the pioneer cemetery on the Waterport Road, on the outskirts of his adopted town. The family surname is commemorated in one of the town streets and quite a few of



his descendants still live there. Most of the houses which the brothers erected, or lived in, well over a century ago stand as solidly as when they were first constructed. They stand as an evocative reminder of the skills and industry displayed by two sturdy sons of a traditional Cambridgeshire yeoman.

#### Footnotes and References

- (1) For early derivation see particularly P.H. Reaney, Dictionary of British Surnames (London, 1958), p.326.
- (2) Cambridgeshire Record Office (C.R.O.) Bassingbourn parish register 1558-1851, transcribed by T.P.R. Layng, 1975; Evidence which tends to suggest that Triggs were not actually living in Bassingbourn includes absence from list of tenants in the Field Book of the Queen's manor of Bassingbourn, 1563-70 (P11/28 misc.) and the list of householders in the 1674 hearth tax (P.R.O. microfilm E179/244/23). A survey of 39 Bassingbourn ratepayers on 13th April, 1691 also excludes any mention of Triggs (vestry accounts P11/8).
- (3) C.R.O. Bassingbourn register (hereafter Bass.PR) marriage of Thomas Trigg and Martha Hills, 18th April, 1738 and subsequent baptism of Thomas (1740), Mary (1743) and John (1746). cf. marriage of Samuel Trigg and Elizabeth Gue, 1762 et seq.
- (4) C.R.O. Bassingbourn Enclosure Award, 1801. R.60.24.1.7.
- (5) Cambridge Chronicle (microfilm in Cambridgeshire Collection, 17th June, 1814.
- (6) C.R.O. Vestry accounts, P11/8.
- (7) Confusion arises between John Trigg, the second son of Thomas and Martha Trigg (bapt.1746) and John Trigg, the eldest(?) son of Samuel and Elizabeth Trigg (bapt.1765) cf. John Trigg holding land of Joseph Beldam Sen. rated at £223.15.0 on 31 March, 1804: C.R.O. P11/8, 1804 et seq.
- (8) Ibid.
- (9) Camb. Collection: 1830, 1835 Poll Books.
- (10) C.R.O. Ennumerators' returns for 1841 Census (P.R.O. microfilm, HO.107/63 Bassingbourn North End No.6, p.5.
- (11) Ibid.
- (12) C.R.O. Cockett and Nash sale book, 269/B789/13.
- (13) See, especially, M.J. Murphy, Cambridge Newspapers and Opinion, 1780-1850 (Cambridge, 1977) chapters 4 and 5; Sir James Caird was one of several observers who noted that Cambridgeshire was 'infested with incendiarism', The State of English Agriculture, 1850-1851 (London, 1852) p.68; other



evidence is given in the assizes, particularly the circumstances surrounding the trial of 'Broggie' Smith, Bassingbourn's infamous arsonist, who was brought before the Cambridge Assizes in March, 1850 following a succession of fires in the village. See 'Broggie, or Who Burned Bassingbourn?' in the Series of Bassingbourn Booklets edited by David Ellison of Orwell, to whom I am indebted for the above.

- (14) VCH Cambridgeshire Vol. II, p.117.
- (15) Cf. M. Spufford, Contrasting Communities: English villagers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Cambridge, 1974) chp.2.
- (16) VCH CAMB. Vol.VIII, p.12. Census returns, 1801, 1841.
- (17) The acreages are those provided in the land tax returns, 1848-50 in the C.R.O.; cf. in 1851, 8 substantial farmers occupied 1,800 acres or 97 per cent of the arable land in the parish, leaving 14 smallholders with only 50 acres between them. VCH Camb. VIII, 12.
- (18) Independent Press, 29th July, 1842.
- (19) See entry in the Parliamentary Papers, Emigration Vol.22, 283-9; viz. Robert Chuck, a farm labourer, his wife and daughter and an unmarried 15 year-old girl of the same surname, all formerly of Bassingbourn.
- (20) C.R.O. Cockett & Nash Sale Book, 296/B818/11. The total proceeds from the sale amounted to £37.9.6.
- (21) South Australian Archives (S.A.A.): 'Towns, People and Things We Ought to Know: the Story of Port Elliot', Adelaide Chronicle, 13th April, 1933; An earlier 'Descriptive Sketch' of Port Elliot is given in The Southern Argus, 5th May, 1886.
- (22) S.A.A. D5734 (L), Copy of Samuel Trigg's letter now in the possession of Mr E.T. Kohler of Beverley, South Australia, who has been kind enough to supply me with the more recent history of the Trigg family.
- (23) S.A.A. Shipping Notices, Ref. 313.
- (24) Post Office Directory of the Norfolk Counties (1847) p.1090; C.R.O. 1851 Census transcripts (P.R.O. HO 107/1708), Bassingbourn.
- (25) Ibid., 266a 70, 252b 89.
- (26) An account of the elder John Trigg, adopted by Mr and Mrs Johnson of Bassingbourn, who succeeded to the Johnson farm and was elected Deacon of the Congregational Church, is given in Samuel Hopkins' 'History of Congregationalism in Bassingbourn' ff.49-57, xeroxes of which can be viewed in Lion Yard and the Cambridge University Library.



- (27) S.A.A. Commemorative History of Port Elliot, 1933; the first ship to arrive in Port Elliot direct from London was the 'Lady Emma' which berthed in Horseshoe Bay in February, 1855. A contemporary report in the Southern Argus records that Captain Kaye and his officers dined in style at the Globe Hotel overlooking the Bay, a few yards from Samuel Trigg's homestead.
- (28) Among several vessels lost were the schooner 'Emu', with all hands on 1st May, 1853, 'The Lapwing' (September, 1853), the 'Josephine L. Oiseau' and the brig 'Harry' (1856), the schooner 'Flying Fish' (1860) and the 'Blair Athol' (1864).

THE ALEXANDRA HALL, YMCA, CAMBRIDGE  
"ANIMATED PICTURES EVERY NIGHT" 1908-1914

by Clifford S. Manning

The first regular cinematograph exhibitions in Cambridge took place in the Alexandra Hall in 1908. The YMCA occupied No.1 Alexandra Street, Cambridge, for 102 years; this article looks at five of those years during which moving pictures were shown nightly (except Sundays).

Cambridge YMCA was founded in February 1851. After successively renting rooms at four locations it was decided in October 1868 that the Association should build its own rooms. A freehold estate was acquired at the upper end of Falcon Yard, comprising the "Brazen George" Public House in St Tibb's Row, a stable yard, and two other tenements. It was accessible from four public ways - Alexandra Street, Post Office Terrace, St Tibb's Row and Falcon Yard. The architect of the new building was Alfred Waterhouse, the Foundation Stone was laid on March 30th 1870 by William Fowler, Member of Parliament for the Borough, and the official opening was on January 11th 1871. The total cost was nearly £5000. The accommodation included Classrooms in the basement; a Library and Reading Room, a Conversation Room, and a Committee Room on the ground floor; and, on the first floor, a Lecture Hall, some 50 feet long, exclusive of the platform and the gallery, with an average width of 31 feet. The body of the Hall held about 250, the gallery had seating for 70, and about 30 could occupy the platform.(1)

The Lecture Hall became known as the ALEXANDRA HALL. Fees from letting the Hall provided a regular income for the YMCA. In the years 1900-1907 the average income was £100 a year, but in the twelve months ended March 31st 1908 the receipts dropped to less than £49. (Note: The purchasing power of £100 in 1908 was equivalent to about £3800 in 1985.)(2) The General Committee of the YMCA looked into ways of improving the income and considered the future working of the Association. At the Annual General Meeting in October 1908 consideration was given to eliminating the deficit shown in the financial statement. It was decided to convert the Conversation Room and the Committee Room into Reading and Writing Rooms; the old Reading Room would become a Billiard and



Smoking Room; certain books in the Library were to be retained as a Reference Library and the remainder disposed of to help meet the deficit.(3)

Then came an unexpected source of income. The Northern Trading Company (NTC) of Blackpool applied to hire the ALEXANDRA HALL for an Exhibition by Bioscope of Animated Photography. The President of the YMCA, Dr J Aldren Wright (a Physician of Trumpington Road), arranged to interview the representative of NTC, and the Committee agreed that if Dr Wright was satisfied with the character of the Exhibition the Hall should be let at £4 10s 0d a week from November 2nd to December 29th 1908, upon the terms of an Agreement to be prepared by Mr C J Smart, Vice-President (a Solicitor of 4 Alexandra Street). Dr Wright was evidently satisfied because on October 26th the Alterations Committee accepted a quotation of £1 5s 0d from the Electric Supply Company for supplying and fixing a temporary cable and meter for the Hall, and on November 20th the Cambridgeshire Weekly News (CWN) reported:

"ANIMATED PICTURES: Interest in the NTC Animated Picture Exhibition being held nightly at the Alexandra Hall continues unabated. The cinematograph is becoming more and more popular as an instrument of amusement and this is likely to be the case when the pictures are produced of such excellence as by the NTC. An entire change of programme is made weekly and capable vocalists lend charm to the entertainment."

The departure of NTC at the end of December 1908 was soon followed by the arrival of Mr Fred W Hawkins, the proprietor of Franco-British Animated Pictures, and he opened at the Hall on Monday March 22nd 1909. The CWN on April 2nd reported:

"ANIMATED PICTURES: The Franco-British Animated Pictures have proved very popular during their exhibition at the Alexandra Hall, and the programme for this the second week included an entirely new series of pictures, which are in every way as attractive as the films last week. The favourite items are the pictures of the King's visit to Berlin and that entitled "The Island of St Kilda". This week, too, illustrated songs are introduced and are appreciated."

The success of these film shows was such that in May 1909 Mr Hawkins offered to hire the Hall for the remainder of 1909 at a rent of £3 10s 0d a week to August and £4 5s 0d a week from September to December 1909. The offer was accepted, and the Committee agreed that the piano in the Hall should be retained for the whole year instead of being hired for the Winter months only. The Agreement stipulated that Mr Hawkins would vacate the Hall, on due notice, on any occasion when it was required for the purposes of the YMCA; and that the films shown should be of a high moral tone. This contractual relationship between the YMCA and Mr Hawkins seems to have had its uneasy moments. When complaints were received by the YMCA concerning the type of pictures shown they were passed on to the exhibitor with the reminder that the pictures should be of the right type and with a warning that permission to use the Hall would be refused unless he conformed to the rules laid down by the Association.

Mr Hawkins soon expanded his Cambridge interests. In October 1909 he hired the Assembly Room of the Cambridge Working Men's Club and Institute (WMC),



Fitzroy Street/East Road, for film shows and entertainments. In 1910 he leased the Sturton Town Hall, Mill Road, and reopened it in October 1910 as The Empire with twice-nightly Variety and Pictures. Further afield, he had interests in The Hippodrome, Peterborough (c.1911-1915), the Empire, Stamford and variety theatres/picture houses at Bury St Edmunds and Wisbech.

On January 1st 1910 the Cinematograph Act 1909 for securing safety at cinematograph exhibitions came into force. It provided that all premises used for the public exhibition of flammable films must be licensed and the licensee must comply with the Regulations. On February 14th 1910 the "Borough Justices Adjudicating" (Messrs A Sidney Campkin, G Smith and P H Young) granted the first annual licences to:

- Albert Townsend Lutley and Frank Alan Moore, Joint Secretaries of the YMCA for the ALEXANDRA HALL, Alexandra Street, Cambridge
- Enoch William Fitch, Secretary, for the CAMBRIDGE WORKING MEN'S CLUB AND INSTITUTE, Fitzroy Street, Cambridge
- Thomas Askham, for the HIPPODROME, Auckland Road, Cambridge

The Regulations required the cinematograph apparatus to be placed in a fire-resisting enclosure with effective means to prevent the escape of smoke into the auditorium and a means of ventilation to the open air. Regulation 5(2) required the enclosure to be placed outside the auditorium and to be permanent; but there was a let-out proviso for existing buildings if, in the opinion of the licensing authority, compliance with this Regulation was impracticable or unnecessary for securing safety.

At the ALEXANDRA HALL the projector was in the gallery and some alterations were required to comply with the Act. The Alterations Committee of the YMCA decided:

1. To permit Mr Hawkins to erect a fireproof box outside the back wall of the gallery at his own expense and to allow him to use the gallery as additional seating free of any increased rent until the end of his present agreement, provided a written permit was obtained from the Police that the gallery may be so used.
2. Failing the above, the YMCA would erect the necessary box and charge an additional rent of 10s 0d weekly.
3. If the tenant was not agreeable to either of the above propositions the Association would proceed at once to comply with the requirements of the Act by erecting a ventilating shaft from the cinematograph apparatus to the outside air.

The minutes are silent on the result; but as no plans were approved by the Borough Council for a projection box and the rent was not increased it can be assumed that Mr Hawkins did not agree to options 1 or 2.

In October 1910 the Secretaries were instructed to ask Mr Hawkins to refrain from using the word "Theatre" on his advertising bills for the Hall. Mr Hawkins applied to the Committee for permission to obtain a music licence



for the Hall - no doubt because of the success of the Empire, Mill Road, and the fact that the WMC held a Music and Dancing Licence which permitted variety turns to be staged between the films. A Sub-committee considered the request; in January 1911 it reported that it did not agree to the request but had decided instead to meet Mr Hawkins by reducing the rent to £3 a week throughout the year.

A small problem seems to have arisen in 1911. In April Mr Hawkins was informed that his employees must not use the ground floor lavatory. This does not seem to have been effective because in May the Committee authorised the purchase of a new lock and instructed that the lavatory door must be locked and the key kept in the Billiard Room. In September 1911 the Secretaries were instructed to call Mr Hawkins' attention to the fact that smoking was strictly prohibited in the Hall. Mr Hawkins won this time; in October it was decided that he must pay the extra insurance premium to cover smoking in the Hall. In November 1911 Mr Hawkins was given provisional notice to quit owing to his failure to fulfil his part of the contract. Details of the failure were not minuted but the problem must have been resolved because he remained in occupation.

In February 1913 the Committee increased the rent from £3 to £4 a week but it reverted to £3 in April. A complaint was received about the condition of the chairs in the Hall; a Sub-committee was appointed to inspect them and to obtain an estimate for repairs. In May it was reported that Mr Hawkins had not paid the insurance and other sundry items; Mr Smart was asked to write to him. In June he paid up to date, and made an application to place his own tip-up seats in the Hall; this was agreed provided the seats were not fixed to the floor and on condition that the YMCA should have the use of them free of charge when using the Hall for other purposes. In August a Writ was issued for rent arrears. The rent was paid but the expenses were disputed. The rent was increased to £4 a week from October 6th 1913. Mr Hawkins complained that the piano was in very bad repair; the Committee agreed to repair it at a cost not exceeding £10 and to charge him an extra 2s 6d a week for the use of it.

In February 1914 it was reported that Mr Hawkins' rent was six weeks in arrear; the Committee decided by 6 votes to 4 to give him one week's notice from February 14th 1914. The final exhibition of animated pictures at the ALEXANDRA HALL took place on Saturday February 19th 1914 and the Cambridge Daily News (CDN) reported:

"Regular patrons of the Alexandra Hall will regret to learn that it has been permanently closed. It has catered for the amusement of a section of the Cambridge public for some years, and its closing will cause dismay to many who have been accustomed to visit it for an hour or two's good amusement. The pictures at the Hall, which was the first of its kind to open in Cambridge, have always been of good quality and well produced."

Two separate enquiries were made immediately for the hiring of the Alexandra Hall: by Mr Adrian P Jordan, Managing-Director of Cambridge Picture Playhouses Ltd, the Company which operated the Playhouse in Mill Road and the



Electric Theatre at 4½ Market Hill; and by Mr Alfred J Pointer, the proprietor of the Victoria Assembly Rooms and Café at 4 Market Hill. They were informed that no decision had been made as to the future use of the Hall; in the meantime it was to be redecorated at an estimated cost of £28 10d 0d. In April 1914 it was decided to advertise the Hall for letting on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, However the outbreak of the Great War in August 1914 changed the situation. By December the Hall was being used by soldiers for the purpose of reading, writing, and similar activities. In 1915 the General Committee decided that the Hall would not be let for so long as it was required for work amongst the troops.(3)

#### PRESENTATION - PRICES - PROGRAMMES

The members of the Committee of the YMCA would have been well aware of the tragedy at Newmarket Town Hall on September 1970 when the audience panicked during a cinematograph exhibition, the safety precautions were inadequate and three lives were lost. No doubt the Committee did its best in anticipating legislation and ensuring the safety of the audiences at the Alexandra Hall. Initially the film projector was in a portable enclosure which stood on the floor of the Hall; later, probably when Mr Hawkins entered into the Agreement in May 1909, the projector was moved to the gallery, and the audiences were not permitted to use the gallery. The picture was thrown on to a linen or calico sheet hung above the platform; this sometimes gave additional movement to the picture because the sheet was susceptible to draughts. Until 1911 the best seats, following theatre tradition, were the cane-seated chairs at the front and the cheapest seats were wooden forms or benches at the back of the Hall. Competition arrived in July 1911 when the Electric Theatre opened nearby at 4½ Market Hill, where the best seats were raised at the back of the Theatre; the Alexandra Hall seating was rearranged so that the cheapest seats were at the front.

The programme consisted of a number of short films; usually a drama which lasted for about 10 to 15 minutes and a selection of comic, travel, sporting and topical films each with a running time of between 5 and 10 minutes. The duration of the complete programme was about one-and-a-quarter hours and it was repeated three times each evening. The films were changed twice weekly, on Mondays and Thursdays. By 1913 the occasional 'big feature film' was shown, a 2-reel drama lasting up to 30 minutes.

Publicity was by handbill, or poster, or sandwich men walking the streets wearing advertising boards. A 'barker' was paid 8s 0d a week to stand on the doorstep of the Hall and bawl to attract patrons. Newspaper advertising began in 1911 following the example set by the management of the Electric Theatre. The first advertisement for the Alexandra Hall appeared in the CDN on Tuesday, July 18th 1911:

"ALEXANDRA HALL, Alexandra Street.

Animated Pictures showing Drama, Comedy, Sport and Topical Events.

Continuous entertainment 6.30 to 10.30 pm. Prices: 2d, 3d, 4d and 6d.

The Refined Home of Pictures for 2½ years."

A revised advertisement appeared in the CDN August 29th 1911:



"ALEXANDRA HALL, back of Post Office, ALEXANDRA STREET.  
Continuous Electric Pictures from 6.30 to 10.30 pm.  
The Most Select Picture Hall in Cambridge. Always a Good Refined Show.  
Prices: 3d, 4d and 6d. Children half-price. Raised seats."

The first advertisement in the Cambridge Chronicle appeared on January 5th 1912 (with a higher price for the best seats) and continued virtually unchanged until July 1913:

"ALEXANDRA HALL, Alexandra Street. Grand Programme of Pictures.  
Always showing every evening 6.30 to 10.30 pm.  
Prices: 3d, 4d, 6d and 1s.0d. Children half-price."

On July 18th 1911 the CDN started its weekly Tuesday reports on the previous evening's film under the heading "Cambridge Amusements". The reporter said the Alexandra Hall had always been one of the most popular shows in Cambridge; improvements had been effected and the best seats were now raised at the back of the Hall. Later reports referred to many people waiting for seats during the middle performance; to the children's Saturday matinees; to the pictures being shown with the steadiness and absence of flicker associated with Mr Hawkins' productions; to the installation of one of the latest and most up-to-date cinematograph machines which projected the pictures with more brilliant light (August 1912); to the cleverly-executed piano selections by Miss Clennett, ATCL (a teacher of music of Portugal Street, Cambridge) (January 1913); and the showing of Pathé-Color films, hand-painted in natural colours (September 1913).

When the CDN in 1938 invited readers to contribute their "Early Film Memories" one-third of the letters published mentioned 'the old Alex'. Although it was almost 25 years since films had been shown at the Alexandra Hall the correspondents had many happy memories of such things as the Saturday penny matinees with Wild West films, plenty of Cowboys and Indians - and great fun from sliding down the banisters on the way out. One writer recalled her very first visit to see moving pictures: she was waiting excitedly in the queue but when the doors opened and the children surged forward she dropped her penny and it disappeared down a grating; the rush of children carried her up the stairs but it was "No penny, no admission" - then with miraculous kindness a big boy gave her a penny and she saw her first films; she remembered one picture was coloured with settlers expecting an Indian raid gathered around a blazing red fire. Another writer remembered the agony of having to decide whether to go to the matinee at the 'Alex' to see the 1908 World Heavyweight Championship between Jack Johnson and Tommy Burns or to the Guildhall Matinee where Poole's Myriorama included a Bullfight. A former operator mentioned that if not enough children turned up at the Hall for a matinee it was his job to march them nearly a mile to the other matinee at the WMC. He was invariably greeted with the cry "Got any Cowboys, Mister?". A frustrated patron had wanted to see "John Halifax, Gentleman" but after a number of interruptions the projector had broken down completely and the show was abandoned. An early attempt at making the pictures 'talk' was described; a man and a woman hidden behind the screen spoke the parts of the cast in the film and at the end they came out to take a bow. Another memory (of c.1911) was of the arrival of the pianist, Miss Hensher, from under the platform; she curtsied to the audience,



climbed on to her revolving piano stool and opened the performance with "Alexander's Rag-time Band".

ALEXANDRA HALL - The end

Alexandra Street disappeared completely in the Lion Yard Redevelopment and Cambridge YMCA moved to its new building, Queen Anne House, Conville Place. On August 31st 1972 the sole remaining structure on the Lion Yard redevelopment site was the old YMCA building, surrounded by contractors' compounds, huts and vehicles. The demolition contractors took possession on September 1st 1972 and in about two weeks the building was no more - but the memory of animated pictures at the Alexandra Hall moved one resident to write to the Cambridge Evening News recalling the Saturday matinees and the so-called 'talking' pictures.

### Sources

- (1) Cambridge YMCA 1851-1951 by H.S. Morrow (Cambridgeshire Collection c.37-9)
- (2) Derived from Government Statistics and Whittaker's Almanack:

Multipliers for calculating the approximate equivalent purchasing power of £1 in January 1985 -

1908 = 38 (i.e. £1 then had the purchasing power of approximately £38 now)  
1909 = 36; 1910 = 35; 1911 = 34; 1912, 1913, 1914 = 32.

- (3) Cambridge YMCA Minute Books 1908-1915: I am indebted to Mr Martin Flowerdew of Cambridge YMCA for allowing me to read and take extracts from the Minute Books.

OTHER SOURCES: As set out in CLHS Bulletin No.39 (1984) page 37.

### BOOK REVIEWS

DOWN YOUR STREET - CAMBRIDGE PAST AND PRESENT by Sara Payne. Volume 1 Central Cambridge, Volume II East Cambridge. Pevensey Press - £4.95 each volume.

When the Cambridge Weekly News started to publish Sara Payne's articles "Down your Street" I read them with great interest and carefully cut them out each week. After a while the pile of yellowing newspaper became a nuisance, so I was delighted when the first volume was published in 1983. That volume covered central Cambridge, and then about a year later the second volume appeared, an equally enthralling record of houses, their owners and their stories, with photographs old and modern to illustrate them. Each volume has an excellent map; East Cambridge covers the Kite Area, St Matthews and Romsey. Sara Payne's careful research and the skilful and entertaining way she has put together her findings commands our respect and gratitude. Quoting from the Foreword to Volume II by Mr D.W. Urwin "At the end of a fascinating read you have learned a lot, met many new people, seen the past come to life in pictures and words, and most of all enjoyed yourself".

J.M.



CAMBRIDGESHIRE COLLECTION - The Cambridgeshire Collection has now produced a Catalogue of the Collection bookstack in microfiche. This has been compiled over several years by Mike Petty ALA, the local studies librarian and well known to all interested in local history. This should be of great interest and help to all doing work on Cambridgeshire subjects. The cost is £25, and it is obtainable from the Cambridgeshire Collection in the Lion Yard. Copies are also available for consultation in the local branch libraries. There is also a small Introduction to accompany the fiche catalogue showing the classification scheme (price £1). Researchers all over the county will be very grateful to Mr Petty for his bibliography.

Cover illustration is from a collection of billheads of Cambridge tradesmen kindly loaned by the Cambridge Collection.

## EXCURSIONS 1984

### EXCURSION 1 Lavenham. Thursday 17th May (Leader Mrs D. Whitworth)

The route to Lavenham follows the Stour Valley through the once flourishing wool settlements of Clare, Cavendish and Long Melford with their magnificent churches built and supported by the wealthy merchants of the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries. Lavenham, the largest of them, stands on a rise above the small river Brad. It is considered the best preserved example of a mediaeval industrial town in Britain. It retains the 13th century plan with the Market Place on the hill and steep streets leading down to the valley. The wider High Street connected the two manors Netherhall and Overhall. Water Street follows the culvert built to contain the stream in the 13th century.

It was already a wool exporting centre when Flemish weavers settled and built their houses along the street after 1334. The cloth industry brought wealthy merchants to the town, and by 1425 the Swan Inn, the White Horse and the Crown had been built. Timber framed houses of all shapes and sizes were crowded in from the local Wool Halls down to the low weavers' workshops distinguished by their long upper storey windows. The demand for Lavenham blue serge to clothe the armies of the Wars of the Roses increased the prosperity of the town. The Lord of the Manor John de Vere 13th Earl of Oxford returned victorious from the battle of Bosworth in 1485 and with the wealthy Spring family and other clothiers joined to build one of the finest parish churches in England.

On a wet cool day Miss Ranson met us in the Market Place and gave us a talk on the history of the place. We then visited the Guild Hall of Corpus Christi and its exhibition of the History of the Wool Trade, now maintained by the National Trust. We walked down Water Street, passing the Flemish Weavers' houses, Nos 21-26, the de Vere Hunting Lodge (Nos.59-60), the restored Priory (Nos.67-69) and the grandest of all the Wool Hall of the Guild of our Lady now incorporated in the Swan Hotel. We continued up the High Street and Church Street to the church of St Peter and St Paul, a magnificent perpendicular flint and stone edifice, dominating the southern side of the town, "Lavenham's crowning glory". After seeing the church we had tea in the town.



EXCURSION 2 Oundle School Chapel and Elton Hall. Thursday 16th August  
(Leaders Mr C.A. Hartridge and Mr D.V. Durell)

Oundle's School Chapel was visited in order to see the notable stained glass windows designed by John Piper and Hugh Easton. A fine new organ is being installed by Frobenius of Denmark, one of the world's finest organ builders.

Elton Hall is in the old Soke of Peterborough and close to Northamptonshire. Part of it is late 15th century, particularly the gatehouse and the chapel undercroft, though little survives of the upper part of the chapel. The property was sold in 1617 and became ruinous. It was rebuilt by Sir Thomas Proby at the end of the 17th century. Later it was remodelled by Henry Ashton.

EXCURSION 3

The local History Festival at the Museum of East Anglian Life in Stowmarket was to have been the object of the third excursion of 1984, but unfortunately there was insufficient support so the excursion was cancelled. Some members of the Society helped to man a stall shared with the Cambridge Antiquarian Society.

EXCURSION 4 Prickwillow, Ely & Wentworth. Saturday 22nd September  
(Leader Mr R.D. English)

Effective drainage has played an important part in the economic and social development of the fens. Prickwillow, 4 miles north-east of Ely, was a pioneering centre for this work in the last century. Our excursion started at the Pumping House Museum where one of the old engines was run for our benefit. The first engine house was built in the 1830s and stands next to a much larger one erected in the 1880s; both of these were used in keeping the area drained and taking over from the numerous less efficient wind pumps. Much of Prickwillow is built on the fen. The Victorian Church and houses are set on the piles passing through the layer of peat into the clay. A good example of peat shrinkage is illustrated by the Rectory which, when built in 1880, required only two steps to the front door but has since needed another seven to be added!

In Ely we visited Waterside, a once significant commercial area which remained fairly prosperous until the coming of the railway. We were able to see inside one of the oldest properties, a merchant house built in 1589. It still has some lovely old fireplaces and a spacious attic where apprentices probably worked and lived. In 1715 the house was divided into three cottages but in the last ten years it has been converted back into a single dwelling. After a long business decline Waterside has, over the last 20 years, undergone considerable restoration and with the granting of General Improvement status in 1971 is much in demand for residential and recreational purposes.



After tea our trip was concluded at Wentworth Church. In spite of some fairly drastic restoration work in 1868 the church still possesses some 13th century lancet windows, late Norman north and south doorways and a 12th century stone sculpture on the north wall of the chancel.

#### WINTER LECTURE PROGRAMME 1984-85

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| 3 November 1984 | Councillor Howard was unable to give his talk on the history of the Labour Party, but Mr A. Kirby spoke on the history of the Cambridge College of Arts and Technology |
| 1 December 1984 | Mr D.B. Wallace on "The River Cam, Past and Present"   |
| 5 January 1985  | Mr J.B. Durrant on "The University Arms Hotel, 1934-1984"  |
| 2 February 1985 | Mr M.R. Francis on "The Work of the Cambridge Preservation Society, with special reference to Wandlebury"  |
| 2 March 1985    | Mr M.H. Black on "The Cambridge University Press, 1584-1984"   |
| 18 March 1985   | Dr R. Latham on "Pepys and his Editors" (Joint meeting with Cambridge Antiquarian Society)   |
| 30 March 1985   | Dr S. Ridyard on "The Cults of the Ely Saints: St. Etheldreda and her Sisters"   |

#### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1985

The Annual General Meeting of the Cambridgeshire Local History Society was held on Saturday, 18th May in the College Lecture Room at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, with the President, Dr E. Miller in the chair. After apologies for absence, the Minutes of the last A.G.M. which had been circulated, were taken as read. Mr Kirby the Hon. Secretary then gave his report. He said we had had a successful year; we had six meetings and two joint with Cambridge Antiquarian Society and they had covered a variety of topics. Homerton College continued to be our meeting place as there did not seem to be any alternative venue. There had been some uncertainty about the cost of tea but the College had been very accommodating about this. We have good relations with the Cambridgeshire Community Council which is still for the present in Great Eastern House but on an upper floor; it will later move to Cambridgeshire House. Our old Bulletins are being held at the Cambridgeshire Collection by kind permission of Mr Petty. The Executive Committee has met four times.



Mr Petty has resigned from the Executive Committee owing to his other commitments; we are very grateful to him for his service for several years. We are also grateful to Mr D.V. Durell who is now resigning as Vice-Chairman. As members know Mr Pye spoke last year of his wish to resign as Chairman owing to his commitments, but we hope he will remain as Vice-Chairman for the time being. Our thanks are due to him for the new dynamism he has brought to the Society and for the work he has been doing with publicity, with the New Hall Conference, the Constitution and a number of other matters which have been of great benefit to our Society. A member who sent in her resignation recently is Mrs Irene Lister. She finds it too difficult to get to meetings and has failing eyesight. She has been a most faithful and helpful member since about the beginning of our Society, and Mr Kirby wondered if the meeting would agree to our making Mrs Lister an honorary member. This was agreed unanimously.

Finally the Secretary said that we had shared a stand at the Stowmarket Local History Festival with the Cambridge Antiquarian Society - an event which had been successful. Thanking Mr Kirby for his report the President congratulated him on what he had done and felt that we must all be grateful for his hard work.

The Hon.Treasurer, Miss D.A. Humphries presented the accounts for the year showing a balance in hand at the end of March of £84.11 in the current account and £95.57 in the deposit account. There were no questions.

Mrs McEwan spoke briefly about the Excursions in 1984; these had been successful except the projected visit to the Stowmarket Festival which had to be cancelled owing to lack of support. Mr C.S. Manning, the Membership Secretary said there were at the end of the year 199 individual members - 26 members had resigned for various reasons and 29 new ones had joined, there were nine organisations affiliated.

Mrs Moullin, the Hon.Editor of the Bulletin said she was trying to find a less expensive printer as the cost of the printing was becoming very heavy. She was also pleased that the last and the forthcoming Bulletins contained sufficient contributions by members, whereas in earlier issues we had relied more heavily on the School Essays.

Mr M. Farrar gave an interesting report on the activities of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society on whose Council he is our representative, mentioning particularly the results of a questionnaire which they had circulated to their members to find out what they thought of such things as the times of meetings, the subjects most liked, place of meeting and a variety of other points (for details see CONDUIT, No.10, March 1985). Mr Pye also gave his report as our representative on the Committee of Cambridge Antiquarian Records Society and the Advisory Panel on Archives of the Cambs. County Council.

In the election of Officers the President, who had wished to resign, agreed to stay on for a further year, the Chairman - no nomination had been received and the Executive would consider the matter at its next meeting. Mr A. Pye would be prepared to stand as Vice-Chairman, and the rest of the officers will remain as before. No new nominations have been received for the Executive Committee so, apart from Mr Petty who has resigned, the members



remain as last year: Mr R. English, Mr J.M. Farrar, Dr S. Hughes, Mrs J.E. Moullin (ex-officio), Dr J. Ravensdale, Mr B.D. Threlfall and Mr H.J.B. Webb.

The President then said that the Executive Committee felt that it was imperative to discuss the raising of the subscription. Last year we had made a small profit, largely from the sale of old Bulletins, but there is really nothing we can do to save expense. It has been proposed that we raise the subscription in 1986 from its present £3 for individuals, £4 for joint membership and £3 for corporate membership for organisations to £5, £6 and £6 in 1986. This was agreed.

Mr Farrar gave an account of the British Association for Local History on which he is our representative. It has now moved from London to Matlock, having separated from the National Council of Social Service. It is suffering from shortage of money and will have to lose its field officer and face other economies. It held a conference in Cambridge last year and organised the Stowmarket Festival.

The meeting then adjourned. There was no talk about the College as had been hoped originally.

CLHS BULLETIN No.39 (1984) pages 26-42:

THE CINEMATOGRAPH AND ANIMATED PICTURES: CAMBRIDGE 1896 - 1909

#### ERRATA

page 27:

- line 29 For "Cintematographe" read "Cinematographe"
- line 36 For "50 minutes" read "15 minutes"
- line 41 For "project" read "projector"
- line 42 For "NINEOPTICON" read "KINEOPTICON"

page 28:

- line 11 For "Lumieère" read "Lumière"
- line 26 For "Animatographs" read "Animatographe"
- line 29 For "accompanied" read "accompanied"
- line 30 For "Princes" read "Princess"
- line 32 For "Bert" read "Birt"

page 30:

- line 53 For "cinématgoraphe" read "cinématographe"

page 31:

- line 12 . or "Henly" read "Henley"

page 35:

- line 6 For "team turbine" read "steam turbine"



# CORRUGENDA

page 36:

line 49 Amend "May 1909" to read "March 1909"

page 40:

line 1 Amend "(800)" to read "(913)"

page 41:

after line 9 and before line 10, insert:

"July 29 1973 Designations reversed.  
ABC 1 (736) ground floor cinema  
ABC 2 (452) first floor cinema"

page 41:

line 42 Delete "c". preceding "1915".  
After "closed." add "Requisitioned by the Government"

ELY.

27.3.1985

CSM

## THE WIDE-RANGING INTERESTS OF CLHS MEMBERS

In 1981 the members of the Society were invited to answer a questionnaire about the activities of the Society and to give information about their own particular interests. The committee is grateful to all those members who completed and returned the questionnaire forms.

The Officers of the Society were most appreciative of the constructive suggestions submitted for potential subjects and speakers at the Winter Lectures and also for the variety of locations and places that members put forward for inclusion in the Summer Excursions programmes.

In recent years the Membership Application Form has been expanded so that new members may give details of their main interests with a brief description of any research undertaken. They can also mention any personal skills which are useful for local history. From the information given on the questionnaire and the application forms the Honorary Membership Secretary has compiled a card index of interests and research projects.

Interests in SPECIFIC SUBJECTS are varied and wide-ranging. It is appreciated that many members may have neither the time nor the facilities to carry out detailed research, but some members have been able to do so. In the following summary of specific interests the asterisks(\*\*) indicate those which are, or have been, the subject of research:



- Church History
- Churches and Oratory Houses
- Dissolution of the Monasteries: Economics
- Reformation: Impact on East Anglia
- Evangelical and Anglo-Catholic Revival
- Non-Conformity in the Rampton area
- History of the Quakers in Cambridge\*\*
- Chapel History: Melbourn/Meldreth\*\*
- Medieval Church Graffiti\*\*
- University Reading: Sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries\*\*
- University Interference in Trade in the City\*\*
- Heraldry
- Settlement Patterns and Landscape History\*\*
- Historical Cartography
- Architecture
- Almshouses in Cambridge and the County
- Buildings of Newtown and Castle End, Cambridge\*\*
- Monumental Masonry
- Natural History and Natural Meadows
- The Fens
- Roman Roads\*\*
- Street Names in Cambridge\*\*
- Street Furniture\*\*
- Transport and Economic Development in Cambridgeshire\*\*
- Railways in East Anglia
- Effects of Railways on the Growth of Communities
- Industrial Archaeology
- Political and Trade Union History
- Crime and Punishment
- History of Policing in Cambridgeshire\*\*
- Scouting in Cambridge\*\*
- Borough Justices: Control over Places of Entertainment 1880-1945\*\*
- Cinemas in Cambridge and County\*\*

So far as PLACES are concerned, the predominant interests of members lie, as would be expected, in Cambridge City and Individual villages, particularly the place in which a member resides or has a special connection. There is a lesser but significant interest in the pre-1974 County of Cambridgeshire generally. For a few members this extends to the whole of East Anglia. Research into PLACES tends to be related to a specific village; or to a local aspect, such as "The History of Oakington and the RAF"; or to a particular subject, e.g. Denny Abbey; St John's college.

Some members mentioned aspects of local history which are related to specific PERIODS OF TIME, such as "Prehistoric"; "Roman Britain"; "Medieval Cambridgeshire"; "Cambridgeshire, post-1750"; and "Social History in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries".

Interests within the category "PEOPLE" fall generally into the following groupings:



Notable families and individuals who inhabited a particular village or locality

Family history

Investigating the family name

Population surveys

Most of the members with interests within these groupings are carrying out research.

The questionnaire contained a section for comments and suggestions about the BULLETIN. Seventy-five per cent of those who replied were satisfied with it as an annual publication. The minority wanted the BULLETIN to be published more frequently and to contain more pages.

We would appeal to members who are carrying out research (and who have not made other arrangements for publication) to submit reports and articles for the consideration of the BULLETIN Editor. Perhaps the authors of material which is being published elsewhere would be willing to consider writing an introduction or a summary of it for publication in the BULLETIN in which they can direct the attention of readers to the main publication.

Two members made suggestions which indicate other ways in which members can contribute to the BULLETIN:

"There must be quite a number of amateurs collecting (possibly small) items of local history - insufficient for a full paper or article but which would be of interest and value if published".

"More articles on the growth and development of local villages; more individual recollections by older members of life in Cambridge and the villages; articles on folk traditions".

A third member suggested that there should be occasional articles in a lighter vein, and, finally, a member suggested that selected lectures from the Winter Programme could be published in précis form.

The answers to the questions about SPECIAL SKILLS disclosed a useful array of talent; although some members thought it prudent to enter a caveat such as "rusty" or "school level only". The skills mentioned included - Archaeology, Architecture, Bone identification, Botany, Drawing, Geography, Geology, Latin, Palaeography, Photography, Typing and Ecology.

#### A BRANCH OF THE 'GRAND NATIONAL' IN CAMBRIDGE

By Nicholas Mansfield

In April 1834, the local press in Cambridge reported on a meeting of two hundred working class men in the town. Under the heading 'Cambridge Trades Union', the Tory Cambridge Chronicle voiced the opinion that "These unions



prove themselves by their acts to be a despotism: and if not checked likely to lead to the most ruinous consequences". The Chronicle had heard of Robert Owen's Grand National Consolidated Trade Union, its conferences in London and Birmingham and rumours of a 'Holy Month' national strike. They were especially worried about "publications that do not usually reach the agriculturalists". Reporting on the same meeting even the Whig-Radical Cambridge Independent Press commented that "Unions tended to poison the minds of those connected with them".

The Cambridge working class were politically passive. There was virtually no industry in Cambridge in the early nineteenth century, so the working class depended on the University for employment, either directly as college servants, or as artisans in the service trades that catered for the demands of fellows and undergraduates. Although there was a considerable amount of friction between town and gown, it was not on class lines. The University, by a skilful combination of threat and paternalism, made their own workforce apolitical or even Tory in outlook. Some working class organisations existed amongst artisans, there were political Reform Associations from the 1830's, but these were dominated by middle class leadership. A few trade societies existed but in a period when they were of doubtful legality they deliberately kept a low profile, and we only know of their existence through odd snippets. A Carpenters and Joiners society existed in 1825, and journeymen, shoemakers and tailors had their own secret organisations. The meeting in April 1834 arose out of an attempt by the shoemakers to come out into the open and defend their organisation. More importantly, for the first time it was linked to a national organisation. The meeting was called after a master shoemaker called John Bentley, expecting a strike amongst his workforce, sacked six of his men who were prominent in the secret organisation. Three were accepted back after they promised to give up the union, but the remainder, Anber, Banham and Smith refused. Bentley was reported by the Chronicle as saying "He had no fault with Smith, but that he was determined to be master, and would not be dictated to". The object of the union was, according to Bentley, to "bring up low shops".

The meeting at Bridge's auction room was chaired by Edwin Dixon, 'a shoemaker and occasional preacher, an intelligent and respectable looking young man'. It may be that Dixon was not a Cambridge man but a travelling delegate of the G.N.C.T.U. He gave his address at a public house The Haunch of Mutton, Slaughterhouse Lane. It is likely that a branch would not have been formed in Cambridge without outside impetus. Certainly an unknown London man made a contribution to the meeting which showed advanced radical working class theory. He said that the audience "must unite to show the capitalist that gold was not capital. The working classes were the only possessors of real capital - their labour. They only had to take the power into their own hands, and it would be discovered that instead of being the lower classes, they were in fact the higher".

Dixon started the meeting by criticising Richard Townley, the Whig M.P. for Cambridge for refusing to present a petition to Parliament on behalf of Dorsetshire labourers. Dixon, it seems, had already been organising the petition locally against the transportation of the Tolpuddle Martyrs. Despite



the fact that their M.P. was supporting his own party and would do nothing, the meeting voted to continue with the Dorset petition, "The statute being stretched to meet their case". The petition was lodged at the shop of Mr. Cook, a tailor of Petty Cury. Dixon drew parallels between the Tolpuddle men and their own organisations: "Why shouldn't the working class have lodges like rich freemasons. The unions would do nothing unlawful, at least they would only resist by lawful means."

Dixon went on to suggest ways of employing striking shoemakers. He quoted the celebrated Brighton co-operator Dr. Wade, and suggested a shilling a week levy from lodges of tailors, bricklayers, plasterers, carpenters, masons and painters, to employ the shoemakers in a co-operative enterprise. It is impossible to say whether such lodges existed at the time in Cambridge, or whether Dixon first planned to organise these workers into lodges, or even if they were the invention of the reporters of the Cambridge Chronicle and Cambridge Independent Press, eager to give their middle class readership a good story. Dixon also mentioned the possibility of loans from other unions and read a letter from the Northampton G.N.C.T.U. which enclosed a donation of £5 for the sacked Cambridge shoemakers.

The meeting passed three resolutions:

- "1. That this meeting do consider the conduct of the employer alluded to in discharging the men to be founded on principles of injustice and oppression.
2. That this meeting cannot be convinced that this act of oppression is directed as much against the whole united body of operatives, as against the individuals at the time of this malevolence.
3. That this meeting feel bounded by every tie of humanity and justice to resist by lawful means every attempt to interfere with their rights of private judgement, as relates to 'social intercourse' (lodges) and resist every act of arbitrary tyranny."

The meeting broke up at eleven o'clock and "separated peaceably".

We do not know if such brave words were carried into operation and if the threatened strike of shoemakers in support of their victimised workmates, took place. However the journeymen tailors of Cambridge who were evidently in the union struck against their masters. The college authorities were concerned enough about the dispute to instruct college tutors to refuse to "take in bills" of tradesmen who employed union men.

Dixon was arrested in early May for administering unlawful oaths to members of a trade union at The Haunch of Mutton. Town and gown joined ranks against the union. Dixon was lodged in the Town Gaol and was examined for six hours on the 16th May by both the Mayor of the Corporation and the Vice Chancellor of the University. On the 24th May, Dixon was committed to Cambridge Assizes. He was charged with being "a member and Acting as President of the Friendly Society of Operative Cordwainers and General Union for the



Protection of labour .... the members whereof take an oath not required or authorised by law... guilty of an unlawful combination". Also charged was John Phipps, another shoemaker who had acted as secretary. Both were bailed, another shoemaker and market gardener from Harston, stood surety. The next issue of the Cambridge Independent Press printed the usual anti-union diatribes, as well as the news that "the great majority of journeymen tailors have seceded from the trade union and consequently have returned to work".

The trial was held on the 21st July, the defending solicitor had intended that Dixon and Phipps should admit the offence but "both pleaded in an audible voice 'Not Guilty' much to the surprise of everyone present". The case was quickly adjourned on the defence solicitor's request. The following day a guilty plea was taken and no evidence was offered by the prosecution. Gunning, the prosecutor, and a liberal town councillor, pointed out that combinations were illegal and dangerous. He went on: "The object of the prosecutors however in preferring this indictment, was not to inflict punishment on the defendants, but to warn their townsmen and the public that such associations were illegal and it was an indictable offence to belong to them". The object has been achieved, "the union was dissolved and the men had returned to work". Judge Bosanquet made a long attack on unions in his summing up and thought "the defendants would be grateful to the prosecutors for not pressing a charge". Dixon "expressed thanks for the judge and prosecutors. He had entered the society from what he thought the right principle ... wishing only to alleviate the wants of their fellow man ... Unions were principally dissolved .... no one now existed in this town and he believed never would again".

So ended an episode which might have created some East Anglian Martyrs. Dixon was right about trade unions in Cambridge. The trade societies again went underground and did not emerge until the 1890's. In the first decades of this century the building workers and railwaymen of Cambridge found it difficult to organise a labour movement in the face of fierce working class conservatism.

Indeed the most important result of this trial was to draw the town and college authorities closer together. By gradually relinquishing the medieval privileges it held, the University lessened the town-gown friction, and formed a new conservative front with the town against any form of radicalism. By becoming more paternalistic to its employees the University and colleges created an entrenched working class Toryism. It is remarkable that a group of men attempted to include Cambridge in a radical working class movement that was sweeping the country. Given the town's peculiar circumstance of being dominated by the University, it was probably doomed to failure, even if more radical support had been forthcoming from outside the town. Dixon's brave failure has repercussions which face the labour movement in Cambridge to this day.

Note: All quotations from the Cambridge Chronicle and Cambridge Independent Press, references supplied on request.



## THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR LOCAL HISTORY

The rapid growth in recent years of interest in local history has been second only to the surge of interest in family history. This growth led in 1977 to the establishment under the chairmanship of Lord Blake of a committee to assess the pattern of local history activities and recommend ways of meeting the needs so revealed. In its report, published in 1979, the Committee, among other things, recommended that there should be a strong independent national organisation to support the cause of local history.

In March 1982 a meeting was called at Holborn Town Hall, to which all interested persons were invited, to form a British Association for Local History. This took the place of the Standing Conference for Local History, which had for many years existed under the wing of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (formerly "for Social Service"). Unlike the Conference, however, whose membership was open only to local history societies and county local history councils, it included from the beginning a majority of individual members.

The new Association started strongly with a committee of many talents under the chairmanship of Professor Norman McCord (succeeded in 1983 by Philip Snell), and with the promise of grants from the Department of the Environment, N.C.V.O. and the Ernest Cook Trust. In 1983 Lord Briggs became the first President.

The object of the Association is simply to promote the advancement of public education through the study of local history. With the help of the initial grants a Field Officer, David Hayns, was appointed in the autumn of 1982 to make contact with individuals and organisations throughout the country and to encourage the development of local history studies. In the course of his duties he has organised many conferences, meetings and workshops, including group visits to the Public Record Office at Kew. In our own area there have been a regional conference of county societies at Darwin College, Cambridge, in June 1984, young historians' workshops at Saffron Walden in the summers of 1984 and 1985, including fieldwork and visits to the Suffolk Record Office, and a History Festival at the Museum of East Anglian Life, Stowmarket, in September 1984. Day schools have been organised in various parts of the country on such subjects as nonconformist history, oral history, probate inventories, writing local history and using computers, and there has been a residential school on palaeography. In addition David Hayns has made personal contact with societies, archivists and librarians in many areas.

BALH has organised competitions on local history themes for both adults and schoolchildren, including, in the current year, awards for research by an individual, by a society and by a school, as well as for the "local history society of the year".

The Local Historian, founded many years ago as the Amateur Historian, is now the responsibility of BALH. It is published four times a year at an annual subscription of £7.50 (or £5 only for members of BALH), and contains in each issue, several articles on a range of topics, as well as many reviews and lists



of new publications. The Association also issues other publications, notably "Writing Local History" by David Dymond, and "Secretary Hand" by Lionel Munby.

BALH began life in the offices of the N.C.V.O. in Bedford Square, London, but in August 1984 moved to new offices near Matlock, though meetings continue to be held in London.

The future of BALH is, unfortunately, less rosy than its many achievements since 1982 would imply. Attempts to obtain further grants have so far failed and it seems certain that David Hayns cannot continue to be employed after the summer of 1985. A relatively small increase in the number of members and/or subscribers to the Local Historian would make all the difference. Membership of the Association (in the United Kingdom) costs £5, the subscription running from 1st January. The Local Historian costs a further £5, but to non-members the cost is £7.50. The address of the Association is Cromford Mill, Matlock, Derbyshire, DE4 3RQ.

J.M. Farrar



## MEMBERSHIP OF THE SOCIETY

Membership is open to anyone interested in any aspect of local history.

ENQUIRIES about Membership, NOTIFICATIONS of change of address, SUBSCRIPTIONS

should be sent to the HONORARY MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY:

Mr C.S. MANNING  
30 Bentham Way  
ELY, Cambs.  
CB6 1BS

The SUBSCRIPTION RATES for 1986 are:

INDIVIDUAL Membership      £5.00

JOINT Membership            £6.00

(For husband and wife; or  
Two members living at the same address)

CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP by  
other organisations      £6.00

SUBSCRIPTIONS are payable on joining and on April 1st annually.  
If you wish to pay by Bankers Order, please ask the Honorary  
Membership Secretary for a STANDING ORDER MANDATE form.

*Cover illustration is from a collection of billheads of Cambridge  
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